

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04037 01 OF 02 132116Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----092760 132125Z /62

O 132104Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4096
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04037

EXDIS

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: OWEN MEETING WITH THE PATRIOTIC
FRONT

REF: STATE 063462
SUMMARY. THE FIRST OWEN MEETING WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE
MADE LITTLE PROGRESS TOWARDS AN ALL-PARTY MEETING ON
RHODESIA. OWEN ARGUED THE NECESSITY OF INCLUDING THE
IMPORTANT FIGURES IF A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION IS TO BE
ACHIEVED. THE ALTERNATIVE IS A DEBILITATING WAR. THE
NATIONALISTS INSISTED THAT THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH US
OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS HAVE REMAINED FIRMLY WITHIN THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN FRAMEWORK. AN ALL-PARTY CONFERENCE NOW
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PAGE 02 LONDON 04037 01 OF 02 132116Z

WOULD SHIFT THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS AND IMPLICITLY
CONFER A DEGREE OF RECOGNITION FOR THE SALISBURY AGREE-
MENT. ANOTHER MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW.
END SUMMARY.

1. OWEN MET WITH MUGABE AND NKOMO FOR TWO HOURS THE
EVENING OF MARCH 13. CARVER, ROWLANDS, GRAHAM, AND

MCNALLY JOINED THE BRITISH SIDE; AMBASSADOR BREWSTER AND RAY SEITZ REPRESENTED THE EMBASSY.

2. THE DISCUSSION IN SUBSTANCE REFLECTED THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH THE TWO NATIONALISTS MARCH 11. THERE WERE SOME CONTENTIOUS MOMENTS. THE EXCHANGES WENT IN CYCLES RETURNING AGAIN AND AGAIN TO THE TERMS UNDER WHICH ALL THE PARTIES TO THE RHODESIA DISPUTE MIGHT GET TOGETHER. OWEN APPEALED TO THE NATIONALISTS FOR REALISM. HE SAID THERE WAS NO PROSPECT FOR A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION IF KEY FIGURES WERE NOT INVOLVED IN THE TALKS. NO PARTY NEED COME TO A MEETING HAVING COMPROMISED ITS POSITION. THE UK AND US WOULD STAND ON OUR PROPOSALS; THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WOULD STICK WITH THEIRS; AND THE SALISBURY GROUP WOULD HAVE THEIR POSITION. OWEN ARGUED THAT IN FACT THESE THREE POSITIONS SHARED SOME COMMON GROUND: INDEPENDENCE IN 1978, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, VOTING AGE AT EIGHTEEN. WITHOUT A REALISTIC SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION, RHODESIA WAS INEVITABLY COMMITTED TO A BLOODY WAR THAT COULD LAST FOR YEARS.

3. NKOMO ESPECIALLY BUT MUGABE AS WELL RESISTED MOST OF WHAT OWEN HAD TO SAY. ALMOST TAUNTING THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, NKOMO SUGGESTED THAT IF OWEN WERE ABANDONING THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS HE SHOULD SAY SO. NEITHER WOULD CONCEDE OWEN'S CONCEPT OF A MEETING. THEY ARGUED

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PAGE 03 LONDON 04037 01 OF 02 132116Z

THAT SINCE THE MEETING WITH LORD CARVER IN DAR ES SALAAM AT THE END OF OCTOBER THROUGH TO THE MEETING IN MALTA AT THE END OF JANUARY, THE PATRIOTIC FRONT HAD ALWAYS OPERATED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS. WHILE THEY HAD INSISTED ON MILITARY (AND TRANSITIONAL) TALKS PRECEDING CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, THIS STILL REMAINED A PART OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN STRUCTURE. THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS OUTSIDE THAT STRUCTURE. IT IS THEREFORE CLEAR THAT OWEN IS ATTEMPTING TO SHIFT THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

4. NKOMO OFTEN ACCUSED OWEN OF "TRYING TO PUSH US TO THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT." BOTH HIS AND MUGABE'S APPARENT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 04037

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ATTACHMENT TO OUR PROPOSALS WAS NOTABLE AND THE BASIS ON WHICH THEY DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES FROM MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE. THE IDEA OF AN ALL-PARTY MEETING IMPLIES A SHIFT FROM THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS, "AND THE SHIFT," NKOMO SAID, "IS TOWARDS SALISBURY." BRITISH ACTIONS NOT BRITISH WORDS ARE CONFERRING LEGITIMACY ON THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT.

5. AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION, TED ROWLANDS TRIED TO CLARIFY THE PROBLEM. HE INSISTED THAT A CONFERENCE IS NOT INTENDED TO CONFER ANY FORM OF RECOGNITION OR VALIDITY ON THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT. IT IS MERELY AN EFFORT TO BRING THE PARTIES TOGETHER TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT IS BOTH ACCEPTABLE AND WORKABLE. NKOMO COUNTERED THAT THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT IS AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AND BY DEFINITION OUTSIDE THE ANGLO-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 04037 02 OF 02 132115Z

AMERICAN PROPOSALS. WE SHOULD CONTINUE ON THE COURSE SET IN SEPTEMBER, HE ARGUED. THERE SHOULD BE NO DEVIATION.

6. AMBASSADOR BREWSTER SUGGESTED THAT THE DISCUSSION NOT FOCUS MERELY ON THE PROSPECT OF A GENEVA-LIKE CON-

REFERENCE. WE SHOULD LEAVE OPEN THE QUESTION OF FORMAT AND LOOK FOR A WAY WHICH CAN PROVIDE FOR TALKS WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. NKOMO CONCURRED, AND THE MEETING BROKE UP WITH AN AGREEMENT TO RESUME TOMORROW MORNING.

7. COMMENT: WHILE THE DISCUSSION YIELDED LITTLE, IT CLARIFIED THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES. WE EXPECT OWEN WILL LOOK FOR LANGUAGE OR FORMAT WHICH CAN ACCOMMODATE THE FRONT'S CONCERN THAT ANY MEETING MIGHT BOLSTER THE STANDING OF THEIR SALISBURY RIVALS. NKOMO AND MUGABE, HOWEVER, APPEARED UNCOMPROMISING AND CONTENT TO PICTURE MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE AS OUT OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS AND THEREFORE OUT OF THE GAME. ANY EFFORT TO BRING THEM BACK TO A BROADER FRAMEWORK OF TALKS, THEY IMPLIED, WILL TAINT THE BRITISH AND AMERICANS WITH GUILT BY ASSOCIATION. END COMMENT.

BREWSTER

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